G. Luzzi

Three Romantic Chapters in the History of the Italian Bible

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man spake. The mightiest thinkers who have thrown light into dark places, Descartes, Bacon, Leibnitz, Berkeley, Kant; the mightiest reformers, Wyckliffe, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Wilberforce; the mighty artists in music, painting, architecture, song, Mozart, Handel, Bach, Raphael, Angelo, Dante, Milton; all cry: He is the wisest, as He is the holiest, of us all. But this sanest of the sane said: I am the truth. The uniting text of all His teaching is: "It is I." Paul uses a suggestive expression: "As the truth is in Jesus." It is not, as often misquoted: "The truth as *it* is in Jesus." Jesus and truth are the same. To know Him is to have the substance of all.

I once saw a tourist on the deck of our ship in midocean, about to cast upon the waves a large cube of cork, and asked him his purpose. He replied: "To have something to think about when I wish to escape the cares of office. I will in my imagination try to track the voyage of that cork." I told him that I could tell him what would probably become of his cork. Barring accidents, it would be tossed by the billows, driven by the winds and storms, hurled by the currents and tides; but through it all would float south until at last it would find its destiny in that vast floating island known as Sargasso, the sewage of the Atlantic. "But," I added, "if you will firmly imbed a powerful loadstone in the heart of your cork, it will have a different history. By the might of the mystical magnetism within and its affinity for the pole, it will pull its way through all the storms and tides to the North. And were it not for the ice it would find its home at the top of the world."

A far more serious question for us, and one far more ennobling, is, What is to become of the souls

From The Biblical Rev.
V. II. Apr. 1917

of men, tossed upon the ocean of human life, driven by the storms and conflicting currents of thought, rising and falling on the resistless tides that roll from out of the unknown? One thing is sure, that left to themselves they will find Sargasso, the sewage of humanity. Everything that drifts is lost. There is another thing that is equally sure. If we take Him who is truth in our hearts by faith, love, and obedience, we can never be lost. "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

Just so far as the world receives Him and works His teaching out into practical life, it comes up into the Eternal. The new world which He creates is "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven."

East Orange, New Jersey

THREE ROMANTIC CHAPTERS IN THE HISTORY OF THE ITALIAN BIBLE

By Professor Giovanni Luzzi, D. D., Florence, Italy

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I

Among the many small but historically important towns in Tuscany, Lucca is one of the most charming. In the sixteenth century it was the capital of a little republic and one of the Italian towns most influenced by the Reformation. The pious and learned Augustinian, Pier Martire Vermigli, founded a school there, which, according to his idea, should have been to Italy what Wittenberg was to Germany.

It is in the year 1541. The town is in great turmoil. In the Palazzo Pretorio great preparations are being made. What is going to happen? Nothing less than this: Lucca awaits the arrival of Pope Paul III and the Emperor Charles V. The two most powerful sovereigns in the world had arranged to meet in order to settle several matters—the Protestant revolution in Germany and the convocation of the Council of Trent so insistently demanded on all sides, not to speak of the Turks, who at that time were also causing those crowned heads no little trouble.

The two potentates arrived in due time. Michele Diodati was at the head of the republic that year; and just on the 17th of September, when he had so much to attend to, Anna, his wife, presented him with a beautiful boy. Charles V and Paul III soon came to hear of this interesting event and sent for the proud father. "I wish to be his godfather and the child to

bear my name," said Charles; and Paul added: "I shall administer the sacrament." So it happened that the newly born baby of Messer Michele was called Carlo, had Charles V as sponsor, and was baptized by Paul III. Do you know who this Charles Diodati became? A staunch Protestant and the father of Giovanni, the classical translator of our Italian Protestant Bible. See the irony of human events! Neither the fact of being held at the baptismal font by an emperor hostile to the Reformation as Charles was, nor the sacrament administered by a pope such as Paul III, was sufficient to preserve Carlo Diodati and his posterity from the taint of heresy.

From the point of view of the Reformation the visit of the Emperor and the Pope was a disaster for Lucca. Pier Martire Vermigli, at first closely watched, had at last to flee; the school he had founded was broken up, and many who had adopted the new ideas after no little persecution were obliged to leave their country. Carlo Diodati, when grown up, went to Lyons for instruction in commerce; there the seed sown in his heart by Pier Martire began to spring up. When the massacre of the Huguenots struck all Protestant France with terror Carlo fled to Geneva. There he openly declared his adherence to the Reformed Church. He married twice and by his second wife had seven children. Giovanni, the eldest, was born on the 3d of June, 1576, and was baptized by Nicola Balbani, himself an exile from Lucca.

Giovanni Diodati at the age of nineteen was already a doctor of divinity; at twenty-one he was professor of Hebrew in the Geneva Academy. In 1603 he began to translate the Old and the New Testament from the originals; in 1607 he published his translation at

Geneva, republished it soon after in a second edition, and in 1641 he issued a third edition with notes.

As soon as the version appeared, published at his own expense, which reduced him to utmost poverty, it was most favorably received by the best men of the time. Even those who criticised it pitilessly were nevertheless bound to recognize that it was a great and most valuable work. There is no doubt about it; it surpasses all other Italian translations of the Bible of that time. The Genevan exiles immediately recognized its superiority and began to make use of it, putting aside the versions by Malherbi, Massimo Teofilo, and Brucioli, which they had been in the habit of using up to that time. It has at all times deserved the praise even of Roman Catholic critics and men such as Scaligero, Giordani, Cardinal Mai, and Monsignor Tiboni. Eight years after the publication of his translation Giovanni Diodati entered into his rest, at the age of seventy-three, mourned by all Geneva.

II

In the first half of 1800 Italy, divided and subdivided, oppressed by the tyranny of foreigners, of the Jesuits, and of the Inquisition, showed all of a sudden most hopeful signs of a revival in the field of religion, science, and literature. The cradle of the religious revival was in Tuscany, and in Florence especially. How did it come about? Nobody can say exactly. "The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth."

The British and Foreign Bible Society had already begun to print the Italian New Testament in 1808 and the Italian Bible in 1821. The sacred volumes,

which were sold at a low price, circulated in great secrecy, and sometimes in ways as ingenious as those by which William Tyndale's version was scattered far and wide through the country in spite of the utmost vigilance at the English ports. Hermann Reuclin relates that already in 1831, during the revolution, a large number of Bibles had been introduced into the pontifical states. The Roman Catholics, however, from the year 1816 had been warned against all Bible societies, which were called "a pestilence," and in 1824 Leo XII told them that through the activity of such societies "the Gospel of Christ had become nothing but the word of men; nay, more: the word of the devil."

Rome watched with argus eyes and pitilessly persecuted anyone found to be the holder or circulator of Bibles or New Testaments. Many hid the sacred volumes under ground or in secret corners of their homes, so that they should not fall into the clutches of the police; others threw them into the rivers; but not a few of them providentially came to light again, sometimes in the most unexpected ways, and became in their turn means of a revival. Two men, for instance, went one day to take a bath in the Arno near Signa. They saw a book being carried away by the current; one of them caught hold of it and found that it was a Bible. He began to read and study it and in a short time was led to the truth as it is in Christ. The first Tuscan converts at that time were many. They used to hold prayer meetings and were zealous in spreading secretly the Holy Scriptures among the people.

One of the most prominent of those converts was Count Piero Guicciardini, who belonged to the family

of the great Florentine historian of the sixteenth century. It was in the year 1846 when one day, coming downstairs from his palace, the Count noticed that his porter (who, being a cobbler, had his tool bench in the lodge) was reading a book which he hastily hid as soon as he saw his master coming. The Count, moved by curiosity, went forward and insisted on seeing the book. It was a Bible. "Now, what can you ever understand of this book?" asked he. "I think I understand somewhat of it," answered the cobbler. "Well," replied the Count, "come to my room and let us talk it over." That was the beginning of a long series of conversations during which the Spirit, by means of this humble man of the people, opened the mind and the heart of the aristocrat.

About this time a revolution broke out in Tuscany, and on the 17th of February, 1848, the people got from the Grand Duke Leopold II a constitution which, in its first article, after having proclaimed the Roman Catholic religion to be the only religion of the state, added: "All other already established forms of worship are, however, tolerated." Every convert after that began more energetically than ever to do his best to foster the religious revival. The secret meetings multiplied, and a record still remains in Florence of those held in seven different houses, where the converts met often, prayed, read, and explained the Word of God, and "broke bread."

But, alas! 1849 came, and with it reaction began. The Grand Duke, pressed by Austria and the Pope, not only revoked his constitution, but set himself to purge Florence from all heresy. Workers were arrested and banished from Tuscany; thousands of copies of the New Testament were seized, locked up

by the police, and afterward burned near the river. The printer of Martini's (Roman Catholic) version of the New Testament was condemned to pay a fine of fifty-eight dollars and costs. On the 7th of May, of the stormy year 1851, Count Guicciardini and six others were arrested in the house of one of the brethren, and the Count was condemned to six months' imprisonment. What was their crime? It consisted in having been caught sitting round a table reading the 15th chapter of St. John's Gospel in Diodati's version! When they arrived at the prison, where they had been brought as soon as arrested, Count Guicciardini, taking from an inner pocket a small New Testament which the police had not been able to find when they searched him, said in the most natural way, addressing his companions: "Now, brethren, let us resume our meditation." So they did, and no little comfort did they derive from it. The sentence against the Count was afterward commuted to exile from Tuscany, and so was that of some of the others. The two Madiai, husband and wife, were condemned, the husband to four years and eight months of hard labor in the fortress of Volterra, the wife to three years and nine months of reclusion in the prisons of Lucca.

But the work was progressing all the same. The fire of persecution did not check it; and as in the days of the persecution in Jerusalem, the converts scattered about carried everywhere the incorruptible seed of the Word of God, which, being sown by some and watered by others, God caused to increase in a marvelous way. There is scarcely a town or a village in Tuscany without some trace of those glorious days.

When, sauntering through the streets of the old part of Florence, I pass some of those houses where

the police of the Grand Duke used to dog all who met there in great secrecy, as if they met to perpetrate a crime, the feelings that are aroused in me cannot be described. When I walk along our Florentine Lungarni I see again, in spirit, the mysterious boat in which men used to gather to pray and read the Gospel right in the middle of the river where the police could not so easily surprise them. And up at Fiesole, from the depths of the quarries on the hill, some of which look like the ruins of old Egyptian temples, I seem to hear the distant echo of the hymns sung by the brethren who met there, far from the din of the world and the ambushes of the grand-ducal police.

III

As soon as war between Italy and Austria was declared our great problem was how to find out the best means of bringing to the youth of Italy, who with such enthusiasm had answered the call of their fatherland, a word of encouragement able to help them to do their duty with perseverance and abnegation. We began to study the question: How to manage so as to cause the Gospel of Christ to reach the trenches, the hospitals, the height of the mountains, where our soldiers are contesting the ground step by step? It is necessary here for my reader to have a clear and exact comprehension of our condition in Italy. We live in a Roman Catholic country, in a country which still has as first article of its constitution: "The religion of the state is the Roman Catholic apostolic. All other forms of worship are tolerated"; in a country where the official clergy are always ready to hinder any attempt made to spread the Holy Scriptures among the people. The problem which therefore presented itself to us would have been

solved very easily in a Protestant land, but with us it was very serious and most difficult.

Notwithstanding all this we set to work, and to our great satisfaction and joy found at once the military authorities most kindly and generously disposed toward us. Three of our pastors were made chaplains for the spiritual care of the Protestant soldiers in the ranks. This was the first time that such a thing had happened in our history, and the novelty of the case gave rise now and then to very curious incidents. One day, for instance, in the town of ———, the Bishop went to visit a large military hospital. He heard that the Chaplain was there, and sent for him. The Chaplain, one of our pastors, although surprised at being summoned by a Roman Catholic bishop, went. The Bishop began to speak to him with great effusion and in the kindliest way until some word was said, which required an explanation. "Monsignor," said the Pastor, "I am the Protestant chaplain." At this revelation a cloud passed over the countenance of the Bishop who, however, being a courteous man, pretended not to change his attitude toward the Chaplain but cut short his conversation with him.

The spread of the New Testament among the soldiers has also proved to be less difficult than we expected at the beginning. The Bible Society of London and the Bible Society of Scotland with great generosity have put thousands and thousands of copies at the disposal of the army, and the colporteurs of the two great societies take them everywhere. Not only that, but the Fides et Amor Society, the large majority of whose members are Roman Catholics, especially priests, and which has issued a new popular translation of the New Testament, has been able to

reach places with its sacred volume which the two other societies, too well known in Italy as Protestant, have had no possibility of reaching. The *Fides et Amor,* known as a Catholic society, in the real, genuine meaning of the word, has had the privilege of sending its nicely made volumes to a large number of officers and soldiers, not only through the ordinary Protestant agencies but also, and to a very large extent, through Roman Catholic committees. Its first 500 copies, for instance, were sent by one of these committees to 500 officers; and in a short time more than 3,500 copies were in the hands of the soldiers.

If I were at liberty to enter into details, I might tell you many and most interesting facts. Here on my desk I have letters coming from Roman Catholic priests asking me to send them copies of the New Testament for their parishioners at the front; letters from ladies well known in Italy for their Roman Catholic zeal asking for New Testaments for their sons, nephews, friends; letters from officers and soldiers who from the camp and from the hospitals ask for themselves and for their friends the comfort of a New Testament. So the Word of God is spread everywhere, bringing comfort and sowing in thousands and thousands of hearts a seed which will surely bear its fruit in due season.

Meanwhile, a great spiritual work is being accomplished on our Italian front. Come for a moment with me and see for yourselves. Who are those two men yonder who speak to each other with such effusion and in such a brotherly way? They are two chaplains, the one a Roman Catholic, the other a Protestant. Enemies in time of peace, war has made them brothers. The Roman Catholic chaplain allows his Protestant

colleague to distribute portions of the New Testament to the soldiers. Not only so, but in the morning, after mass, he has asked his companion to address the soldiers gathered round the altar. Further on is a group of Alpini, those grand soldiers who have astonished and are still astonishing the world with their daring. They follow with deep attention and with their eyes full of tears while their Chaplain prays for them and for their dear ones far away. He tells them over again "the old, old story" which they have learned when little children in the hamlets scattered about in the parishes of the Cottian Alps, where their fathers kept faithful to their belief in Christ amidst most atrocious persecutions inflicted on them by the popes, by Louis XIV, by Victor Amedeus II. Further on still one meets a sad procession; it is a funeral. A hero has fallen. Before his grave all anger, all religious strife, ceases; only the heart, the dear Fatherland, and Almighty God are in mind around the tomb of the brave. Yonder is an encampment. Under the tents are the soldiers in groups. What are they about? One is reading; the others are intently listening. It is the Gospel they are studying, and it comforts their hearts and strengthens their souls in the faith. And in the trenches, in the moments of respite between one fight and another, you will find many of those soldiers intent on reading the Book which has become as necessary to their souls as material food is to their bodies.

What will the result of all this be? I already foresee. Religious sentiment, which has never been altogether quenched in the Italian people but has been diverted by hundreds of other preoccupations, will be revived after the war and will again become, as it was

in some centuries of our past history, a powerful national energy. Not only that, but when this sentiment, which the official religion has never known how to cultivate and guide in the right way, is put again into immediate contact with the Gospel of Christ it will be purified and transformed into *Christian* sentiment in the deep and spiritual sense of the word.

This religious sentiment having thus become Christian through its contact with the Gospel will lessen the distance which separates the Roman Catholic from the Protestant Church. During the last ten or fifteen years that distance has already diminished. People never saw what they now see, that in the classical land of the papacy many Roman Catholics and Protestants fraternize, love each other, co-operate in the great work of the spread of the Gospel of Christ, and consider this Gospel as the only hope of a moral redemption of the nation, the only foundation of the true greatness of Italy. The time will come, and perhaps is not far off, when the Spirit of God through the instrumentality of the sacred volume will have wrought such miracles of moral transformation in the consciences and hearts of the people that Protestants and Roman Catholics will wonder, nay, will feel ashamed, that they have lost so much time in attacking and backbiting each other; and, united in a bond of brotherly love, they will start fighting with one accord "the good fight of faith" against vice, indifference, infidelity, and all the foes of the Kingdom of God.

This awakening of the religious sentiment transformed into real Christian sentiment will bear its fruit not only in the bosom of Roman Catholicism but also in the bosom of our Protestant churches. If we wish the Kingdom of God to advance in Roman Catholic

countries it is absolutely necessary for the Protestant churches to cease laying stress on their denominational idiosyncrasies and to assert only, and that energetically, the essential truths of Christianity which are common to them and to Roman Catholicism. In a Roman Catholic country where the church is one (with a unity liable to be discussed, it is true, but still *one*) nothing is so fatal to the progress of the work of God as the fact of missionary churches being divided among themselves, bearing foreign names which have no doubt their historical *raison d'être* in the lands where they originated but which in our Latin countries have absolutely no intelligible meaning whatever. Those churches, being obliged to adopt methods and ways which cannot rationally be adapted to our Latin spirit and traditions, reduce evangelical work in Italy to a sterile kaleidoscopic reproduction of the Protestantism beyond the seas. War, with all its horrors and with the urgent and sacred duties which it has laid upon all those who have a heart and any Christian feeling, has already drawn the Protestant churches near to each other. The awakening of that religious sentiment of which I have been speaking will complete the blessed work and will cause the Kingdom of God in Italy to see better days than in the past.

Some of my readers will ask: What is the attitude of the Curia, of the official Vatican, in the face of all this movement which you have been describing?

The answer has been given by the Pope himself in an official utterance which has filled everybody with astonishment and pain. He lately received in the Vatican the members of the Work for the Preservation of the Faith. After having expressed his satisfaction for all the zeal shown and for all the results attained

by the society up to the present, he said: "Faith is a treasure far more precious than all the goods of this world: it is the fundamental index of the whole Christian life, inasmuch as without it the Christian cannot please his God; nay, he becomes a contradiction to himself: because a faithless faithful is not to be conceived. To him who steals the faith, only one name can be applied: thief. What else are those emissaries of Satan, who in the very middle of the holy city erect temples where true worship is denied to God, where pestilential chairs are founded to spread error among the people and to sow largely lies and calumny against the Catholic religion and its ministers? These diabolical arts are so many assaults against the piety of the sons of Rome, and assaults all the more dangerous and insidious, inasmuch as too often accompanied by allurements of temporal advantages. O poor fathers, to whom a free education to your children is offered at the cost of their severance from the church! O poor children, to whom help is promised for the old age of your parents! And children and parents will give their names to the evangelical sect! Who will not wish to eliminate the damage that, through all this, must ensue to this holy city? And then can you think of the scandal that would befall the Catholic world if Luther and Calvin were to succeed in definitely planting their tents in the city of the popes? It is therefore necessary to protect the faith of our brethren, it is necessary to prevent this execrable theft from being perpetrated to their loss."

Naturally what the Pope says in connection with the evangelical work carried on in Rome he means to be applied to the whole work which is being carried on throughout the Peninsula. I have nothing else to

say but to repeat what I said in concluding an article inserted in another American publication.[1] I beg my readers to allow me to quote myself:

"Let us learn again the old lesson. The reformation within the Church of Rome, which is at present only a hope, an object of prayer and a cause of suffering for so many, will surely, some day or other, become an accomplished fact. Not, however, by initiative or merit of the Vatican. The Vatican will get a more or less liberal Pope, but never a Pope who, on his own accord, will take the position of a reformer, in the true and grand significance of the term. When the hour of a new order of things shall strike, the Vatican, stubborn as it is, will not be a leader, but will be dragged in by the force of events. The true leader will be the church herself, the collectivity of awakened believers; the glorious word of freedom, the hymn of victory will come from the mass of the faithful exalted to the full possession of their spiritual rights, and from a clergy inspired by the great vision of the true Christianity of Christ."

[1] The Churchman, New York, April 24, 1915.

COLLATERAL READINGS ON THE INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

May 6. Jesus the Servant of All. John 13:1-17.

1. The Messiah's cross. Mark 8:31-33; 10:45; Philippians 2:5-11.
2. The Christian's cross. Mark 8:34-38; 1 Peter 4:12-19.
3. The triumph of Christ and the Christian. Hebrews 2:5-10; Revelation 1:9-20; 7:13-17.

May 13. Jesus the True Vine. John 15:1-16.

1. Christ and the Father (v. 1 and *passim*). Isaiah 42:1-9; John 17.
2. Christ and the believer (v. 4). Read Isaiah 60:15-22, compared with Job 15:31-34.
3. The manifestation of Christ in the believer (v. 8). Read Ephesians 4:15-16; Galatians 5:22-26.

May 20. The Importance of Self-control (Temperance Lesson). Isaiah 28:1-13.

The significance of this passage as a temperance lesson lies in the fact that the madness of those who defy and scorn Jehovah is compared with the false pride, the arrogance, the fading splendor, and the ultimate ruin of the riotous drunkard. Read for comparison Deuteronomy 29:19, 20 A. R. mar.; Isaiah 56:12, and follow up the connection between idolatry and drunkenness. Read also 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.

May 27. The Holy Spirit and His Work (Pentecost Lesson). John 15:26-16:14.

1. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. Zechariah 4:1-10. Compare Genesis 1:2 and Isaiah 61:1.
2. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. Read Romans 8:9-11; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; Ephesians 2:13-18.
3. The Holy Spirit is the life of the Christian (v. 13 and *passim*). Read 1 Peter 4:14; Romans 5:5; 8:1-39 (the great Spirit chapter).

June 3. Jesus Betrayed and Denied. John 18:1-18. Read the following passages in the order named: 1 Samuel 8:1-9; Psalm 95; Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Jeremiah 3:1-25; Zechariah 13:6-9.

June 10. Jesus Crucified. John 19:16-30.

Read and compare the parallel accounts.

Read in the order named the following passages: Zechariah 12:10-14; Matthew 26 (marking references to our Lord's death); Mark 10:32-34, 38, 39, 45; Luke 18:31-33; Romans 5:6-11; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 1:1-4; 1 Peter 1:6-11; 1 John 1:1-9; Revelation 1:4-7.

June 17. The Risen Lord. John 20:1-18.

Read Psalm 16:10, 11; Daniel 7:13, 14; Matthew 16:21-28; Romans 1:1-7, particularly verse 4; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28; Revelation 1:9-20.

The appearances of the Lord after the resurrection and the *probable* order (according to Orr, article, Jesus Christ, International Standard Bible Encyclopædia):

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